PLEASE RETURN

evaluating
reading
materials

reading
improvement

Office of Public Instruction
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State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

A committee of the statewide Task Force on Reading has developed this publication in response to a need reflected by the State Needs Assessment in reading.

Montana accreditation standards also ask that schools evaluate materials used in a subject area at least once every five years.

There are numerous choices that any school can make when selecting materials. It is the hope of this committee that we have provided some basic guidelines for evaluation of reading materials.

Special thanks go to: Chairperson Ella Ortner, Rita Brownlee, Donna Ellison, Roland Flynn, Mary Merten, Dr. Eloise Snavely, and Dr. Willis Vandiver.

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INTRODUCTION

The search for a reading program that is best for all children is never-ending. Because individual youngsters have unique learning styles, one system of instruction may be more appropriate than another for some children. Therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of various systems must be adjusted to meet individual needs.

For several decades, educators have agreed that children progress in several stages toward maturity in reading. These stages usually include:

- readiness
- learning to read
- developing reading power
- reading to learn
- refinement of reading skills.

When examining reading programs, checking for the progression of these stages will insure that children have the opportunity to fully develop the skill of reading.

REMEMBER that the key to effective reading instruction is the teacher. Skillful teachers can adjust and adapt a reading program when working with a system they endorse and understand.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR
EVALUATING READING MATERIALS

A suggested procedure for evaluating reading materials follows. After examination, you may wish to add or delete steps, depending on your needs.

1.0   Task Analysis
    1.1   Specify the purpose(s) for the change.
    1.2   Outline the requirements for achieving these purposes.
    1.3   Establish the budget.

2.0   Planning
    2.1   Form the reading committee to include:
        2.1a   Central office personnel
        2.1b   Principals
        2.1c   Teachers: beginning as well as experienced
        2.1d   Reading specialist
        2.1e   Parents, if available
    2.2   Define tasks and responsibilities.
        Make clear from the beginning how the final decision will be reached.
    2.3   Review and clarify district goals for reading instruction.
    2.4   Review current issues and research for the different approaches.

3.0   Studying Programs
    3.1   Develop written guidelines for selecting a program; samples in next section.
    3.2   Request samples of materials from publishers.
    3.3   Study each program using the developed guidelines checklist.
    3.4   Visit schools using programs. Talk to teachers and students.
    3.5   Keep total district staff involved (community, too) by writing and distributing summaries of all committee meetings.
    3.6   Invite publishers from narrowed list of programs to make presentations.
    3.7   Make decision to pilot or implement.

4.0 Piloting (optional)
  4.1 Select two to four programs.
  4.2 Establish pilot schools.
    4.2a Decide grade levels for piloting, including all levels.
    4.2b Define responsibilities of pilot teachers.
  4.3 Specify evaluative techniques to be used.

5.0 Evaluating the Piloting
  5.1 Clarify pre- and/or post-testing procedures.
  5.2 Keep total district staff involved by providing for visitations, videotaping, etc.
  5.3 Use criteria checklists.
  5.4 Write narrative summaries. Involve students in summaries.
  5.5 Write conclusions and recommend the program for implementation.

6.0 Implementation
  6.1 Order appropriate amounts of materials within the allotted budget.
  6.2 Provide initial and on-going inservice seminars for the new program. For inservice, use consultants, provided by the publishers, as well as teachers who piloted the program.
  6.3 Establish dates and strategies for continual re-evaluation of the implemented program.

SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION
OF READING MATERIALS

As evaluation of materials progresses, a checklist or guide may be developed to aid the evaluation of materials from a common point of view.

The following are examples of various types of checklists and are not meant to be exhaustive.

Any group studying reading materials may have specific concerns not mentioned in the samples. It is hoped the suggested lists will be modified to meet your needs.

READING MATERIAL CHECKLIST

Name of Series _____

Authorship _____

Publisher _____ Copyright Date _____

Directions for Evaluation

1. Give 2 points for each question you answer "Yes" without any qualifications.
2. Give 1 point for each question you answer "No" with some qualifications.
3. Give a zero (0) for each question you answer definitely "No."
4. Total the number of points on each section and then for the five sections.

Goals and Objectives

1. _____ Are the goals and objectives clearly stated? Do they agree with your district's goals and objectives?
2. _____ Is the content of the materials directed to the achievement of the stated goals and objectives?
3. _____ Are adequate assessment techniques that measure student achievement of the objectives included? (Pre/post tests and/or other assessment)
4. _____ Are directions for helping the teacher to interpret the assessment results adequate?

Development of reading skills and interests

1. _____ Does the program develop a variety of word attack skills needed by the pupils at each level?
2. _____ Is there an adequate program for teaching pupils the study skills needed in the content areas?
3. _____ Is there a variety of comprehension skills included in the program?
4. _____ Is there an adequate program for teaching pupils critical reading skills?
5. _____ Are the skills sequenced appropriately or alternatively sequenced?
6. _____ Are the skills introduced adequately?
7. _____ Is there provision made for periodic review of skills in order to maintain mastery?
8. _____ Does the program develop children's interest in reading as a voluntary activity?
9. _____ Does the program help children to develop literacy appreciation?
10. _____ Does the program make the child aware of the importance of syntax, morphology, and phonology as elements of meaning?
11. _____ Is the initial readiness program suitable for children with a variety of abilities?

Content of Materials

1. _____ Is there a balance of types of reading matter?
2. _____ Is the content of the materials interesting to children?
3. _____ Will the content of the materials broaden children's interests and knowledge?
4. _____ At the early levels is there systematic repetition of key vocabulary?
5. _____ Are the vocabulary and sentence structure suitable for the students who will be using them?
6. _____ Is there evidence of stereotyping?
7. _____ Is there a variety of types of illustration?
8. _____ Do the illustrations stimulate interest and clarify concepts?
9. _____ Do the materials portray racial, religious, ethnic and sex groups in such a way as to build mutual understanding, appreciation, and acceptance?

10. _____ Is the size of the pupil print suitable?
11. _____ Is the workbook designed to be read easily by the students, including a variety of activities?
12. _____ Are the supplementary and related materials educationally sound and economically feasible?

Teacher's Manual

1. _____ Is it well-organized and easy to use?
2. _____ Does it provide information about the total reading program?
3. _____ Does it provide adequate information concerning the portion of the reading program for which the manual is designed?
4. _____ Are the lesson plans clear and well-organized, so as to carry out the lesson objectives?
5. _____ Are suggestions made for differentiating instruction for pupils of varying abilities?
6. _____ Are suggestions made for enriching and expanding the basal program?
7. _____ Are suggestions made for accommodating pupils who speak a dialect different from the dialect utilized in the instructional materials?
8. _____ Are suggestions included for varying oral reading experiences?

Professional Standing of the Authors and Publisher

1. _____ Are the authors currently working in the field of reading?
2. _____ Do the authors represent a range of experience in the field of reading? (Teaching children, training teachers, conducting research)
3. _____ Does the publisher have a reputation of responsibility and service?

EVALUATION OF READING MATERIALS

Does the material:	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Does Not Pertain To Grade Level
1. Stress readiness activities			
2. Develop sight vocabulary			
3. Build visual and/or auditory discrimination skills in:			
a. word configuration			
b. context clues			
c. phonetic analysis in:			
1) initial consonant sounds			
2) blends and digraphs			
3) vowel sounds			
4) working with root or base words			
5) working with synonyms & antonyms			
d. structural analysis			
1) inflectional endings			
2) compound words			
3) prefixes and suffixes			
4. Develop comprehension through the use of:			
a. details			
b. main ideas			
c. sequence and relationship			
d. following directions			
e. inferences			
f. reviewing			
g. making comparisons			
h. summarizing			
i. drawing conclusions			
j. critical evaluative reading			
5. Build study skills through the use of:			
a. dictionary			
b. maps, graphs, globes, and tables			
c. various reference resources			
d. note taking			
e. outlining			
f. following directions			
g. self-evaluations of progress			
h. extensive reading			

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING READING BOOKS
Springfield Public Schools
District No. 186

Series/Company _____

    1 = weak   5 = strong

General Observations

1. Presents both sexes in variety of roles	1 2 3 4 5
2. Ethnic acceptability	1 2 3 4 5
3. Correlation with school objectives	1 2 3 4 5
4. Encourages use of the library	1 2 3 4 5
5. Authorship	1 2 3 4 5
6. Durability of books	1 2 3 4 5
7. Program presented in sufficient levels	1 2 3 4 5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Format

1. Pictures (variety, appropriateness)	1 2 3 4 5
2. Size of print	1 2 3 4 5
3. Length of stories appropriate	1 2 3 4 5
4. Length of sentences	1 2 3 4 5
5. Type of paper	1 2 3 4 5
6. Variety of art media	1 2 3 4 5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Content

1. Balance of stories, poems, jokes and other (biography, rural, urban, fantasy, humorous, fanciful, realistic, modern)	1 2 3 4 5
2. Seasonal sequence of stories	1 2 3 4 5

Content - cont.

3. Story plots (interest level)   1 2 3 4 5
4. Humor   1 2 3 4 5
5. Appropriateness of vocabulary   1 2 3 4 5
6. Provisions for individual difference   1 2 3 4 5
7. Develop appreciation of good literature   1 2 3 4 5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Skills

1. Methods of word attack   1 2 3 4 5
2. Provisions for variety of oral reading   1 2 3 4 5
   situations
3. Readiness activities for all lessons   1 2 3 4 5
4. Development of auditory skills (oral   1 2 3 4 5
   activities)
5. Comprehension skill development

       Literal   1 2 3 4 5
       Inferential   1 2 3 4 5
       Sequencing   1 2 3 4 5
       Main idea   1 2 3 4 5
       Specific details   1 2 3 4 5

6. Development of language skills   1 2 3 4 5
7. Sufficient vocabulary development activities 1 2 3 4 5
8. Dictionary and reference skills   1 2 3 4 5
9. Vocabulary of story consistent with skill   1 2 3 4 5
   development
10. Word attack skills carefully sequenced   1 2 3 4 5
11. Sufficient practice and review of each skill   1 2 3 4 5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Teacher's Guide

1. Appropriate and helpful annotations	1	2	3	4	5
2. Construction of T. Edition	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ease of usage	1	2	3	4	5
4. Enrichment activities	1	2	3	4	5
5. Variety in teaching plan	1	2	3	4	5
6. Questions suggested (literal and inferential)	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Testing

1. Pre-testing (placement)	1	2	3	4	5
2. End of unit test (diagnostic)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Final tests	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Related Materials

1. Spirit masters (content)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Kits, etc. (appropriate)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Supplementary and related books	1	2	3	4	5
4. Flash cards	1	2	3	4	5
5. Charts, pictures	1	2	3	4	5
6. A-V related materials	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Workbooks

1. Appropriate writing space	1	2	3	4	5
2. Appropriate amount on page	1	2	3	4	5
3. Clearness of directions	1	2	3	4	5

Workbooks - cont.

4. Variety of activities	1 2 3 4 5	
5. Teaching pages or Independent	T - I	
6. Directions on pupil page	Yes No	
7. Content-Extend the skills		
Critical reading	1 2 3 4 5	
Word attack skill development	1 2 3 4 5	
Dictionary skills	1 2 3 4 5	
Creative activities	1 2 3 4 5	
Structural analysis skills	1 2 3 4 5	
8. Illustrations (pictures)	1 2 3 4 5	
9. Examples/directions	1 2 3 4 5	

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Overall Rating

Kindergarten level	1 2 3 4 5
Grade one	1 2 3 4 5
Grade two	1 2 3 4 5
Grade three	1 2 3 4 5
Grade four	1 2 3 4 5
Grade five	1 2 3 4 5
Grade six	1 2 3 4 5
Total K-6 program	1 2 3 4 5
Grade seven	1 2 3 4 5
Grade eight	1 2 3 4 5
Total K-8 program	1 2 3 4 5

Company _____

    1 = weak   5 = strong   NA = Not Appropriate

Rate the following in each of the appropriate areas.

	T. Ed.	Text	WB	Support
1. Phonics - Structural Analysis				
Adequate reinforcement of skills				
Vowel treatments - consonant development				
Rate of presentation				
Compound words - base words				
Balance of phonics and meaning				
Sequence of new skills				
2. Balance - Fairness				
Sexism - ethnic acceptability (stories, pictures)				
Career awareness				
3. Story Content				
Appropriate length				
Story plots (interest level)				
Balance of content (fact-fiction)				
Authorship				
Poetry - jokes				
Appropriateness of vocabulary				

READING COMMITTEE - TEAM II

Company _____

1 = weak   5 = strong   NA = Not Appropriate

Rate the following in each of the appropriate areas.

	T. Ed.	Text	WB	Support
1. Comprehension Strategies				
Main ideas				
Inferential - meaning				
Sequencing skills				
Specific details				
Sufficient reinforcement				
Clearness of explanation				
2. Support Materials				
Appropriateness				
Completeness				
Value vs. cost				
Spirit masters				
Audio-visual materials				
Kits				
Charts - pictures				
Supplementary readers or stories				
3. Vocabulary				
Appropriate level				
Variety of ways to introduce				
Reinforcement of:				

READING COMMITTEE - TEAM III

Company _____

1 = weak   5 = strong   NA = Not Appropriate

Rate the following in each of the appropriate areas.

	T. Ed.	Text	WB	Support
1. Study Skills				
Dictionary skills				
Simple outlining (grade 3)				
Reference skills				
How to read content material				
Direction for the student				
2. Provisions for Ind. Differences				
3. Readiness Skills				
4. Testing Program				
Diagnostic				
Interpretation (profile)				
Placement tests				
5. Physical Features				
Pictures - variety of art				
Print (size, etc.)				
Paper quality				
Durability of books				
6. Teacher's Guide				
Ease of usage				
Complete enough				
Variety of ideas				
Questions - literal and inferential				
7. Oral Reading Ideas				
8. Listening Skills				

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING
READING MATERIALS

_____
Publisher

_____
Materials Evaluated

_____
Evaluator

Rating Scale: 3 Excellent, 2 Good, 1 Fair, 0 Inadequate

1. Philosophy
   Consistent with our philosophy
   for reading instruction. _____ _____

   Goals governing the develop-
   ment of the program clearly
   stated. _____ _____

   Goals reflected in the materials. _____ _____

2. Research
   Evidence that the program is con-
   sistent with research findings. _____ _____

   Program validated by prepub-
   lication trial. _____ _____

3. Authorship
   Range of experience repre-
   sented. _____ _____

   Recognized juvenile authors
   included. _____ _____

   Recognized linguist as con-
   sultant. _____ _____

4. Physical Features
   Covers attractive and inviting. _____ _____

   Format and type show respect
   for each maturity level. _____ _____

   Durable binding. _____ _____

   Books convenient for handling. _____ _____

Illustrations show a variety of
art styles and techniques. _____ _____

Pluralistic cultures reflected. _____ __ _____

Selections enhanced, not told,
by illustrations. _____ _____

5. Teacher's Editions
Convenient to handle and clear
in format. _____ _____

Combine reproductions of the
pupil page and lesson plans. _____ _____

Present an overview of the com-
plete program as well as over-
view for the particular level. _____ _____

Lesson plans include specific
objectives, new and review vo-
cabulary and activities to de-
velop skills. _____ _____

Suggest creative supplemental
activities for students of vary-
ing abilities. _____ _____

6. Skill Development
Readiness materials available. _____ _____

Vocabulary development con-
sistent with child's natural de-
velopment of language. _____ _____

Systematic repetition of key
vocabulary words. _____ _____

Rigid vocabulary controls re-
moved at intermediate levels. _____ _____

Emphasizes reading for mean-
ing from the first. _____ _____

At all levels, all three levels of
comprehension emphasized. _____ _____

Sound-symbol relationship
taught in a "speech-to-print"
sequence. _____ _____

Emphasizes use of sound-symbol
clues in relation to other clues
as context clues, word structure. _____ _____

Encourages use of multiple
word attack skills.   ____ _____

Provides motivation to inde-
pendent reading books and
activities.   ____ _____

7. Organizational Structure
   Can be used in a variety of
   organizational structures.   ____ _____

   Offers flexibility so that
   strategies can be varied.   ____ _____

   Provides alternate materials
   for retracking.   ____ _____

   Provides activities for a wide
   range of individual needs.   ____ _____

   Incorporates avenues for
   many learning styles.   ____ _____

8. Content
   Balance between fiction and
   informational selections.   ____ _____

   A variety of environments and
   backgrounds represented.   ____ _____

   Selections appeal to a wide
   range of interests.   ____ _____

   Cultural groups or sexes not
   stereotyped.   ____ _____

9. Evaluation
   Provides materials for inventory
   of pre-reading skills.   ____ _____

   Samples of Informal Reading
   Inventories included at at levels.   ____ _____

   Initial screening tests available.   ____ _____

   End of unit and/or book tests
   provide basis for diagnostic
   teaching.   ____ _____

   Self-evaluation techniques
   given for students.   ____ _____

10. Correlated Materials
    Skills attractive, clearly organized with purposes and directions stated on the pages. _____ _____

    Skillbooks provide effective practice exercises which promote understanding of the skills developed in the program. _____ _____

    Perforated pages to encourage use only as needed. _____ _____

    Multi-media materials available. _____ _____

    Necessary correlated materials affordable within established budget. _____ _____

FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

Providing teachers with inservice on the use of new materials is a vital part of any text adoption.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the new materials can provide valuable information for further expenditures.

FOLLOW-UP

Too often after a reading adoption has been made, teachers are left on their own to work out the teaching of the materials as best they can. Arrangements should be made with the publishing company to hold at least two workshops for the teachers on using the new adoptions.

Workshop number one should be held before school opens in the fall. The second meeting should be held approximately ten (10) weeks following the first.

Inservice workshops and teacher preparation will enhance an effective reading program. Continued inservice throughout not only the first but succeeding years will contribute to the ongoing success in the usage of the selected materials.

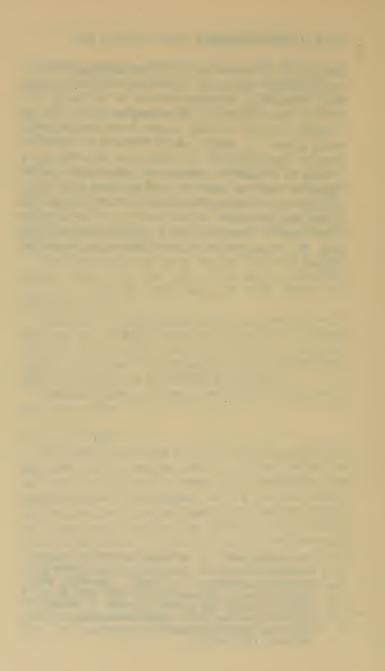**Teachers need and deserve this kind of help with new materials!**

EVALUATION

Evaluation activities can be carried out by students as well as teachers and by a school system as well as at the classroom level. The evaluations can determine the effectiveness of the program. Evaluation standards can be based upon general grade/age level expectations for student performance (norm-referenced) or level of pupil performance on particular tasks related to the product's objectives (criterion-referenced). Standards may be supplied with the product (state or national norms), inherent in the product (behaviorally-stated objectives), or developed locally in the school system or classroom. Evaluations can be made of

any or all dimensions of student development or achievement—effective, perceptual-motor, cognitive, linguistic, creative—as well as of skills and content specific to school subjects. In the case of reading, the dimensions range from very specific word attack or phonic skills through comprehension to "appreciation" or enjoyment of reading.

Use of evaluation techniques can provide school systems, teachers, parents, and students with information on whether the selected materials actually meet the goals and objectives of a school; where additional or supplementary materials are needed; and the changes in student behavior or performance.